

CHAPTER 2

MESSENGER  OF MERCY
THE EMBODIMENT OF LOVE

THE TOPIC OF LOVE AND NON-VIOLENCE IN ISLAM, IN AN environment imbued with intolerance, extremism and terrorism, is very significant for all the nations of the world. We discern the manifestations of loving humanity and eliminating violence more frequently in all the Islamic teachings and the conduct of Allah's exalted Messenger ﷺ. Signifying the exalted station and glorified rank of the final Messenger ﷺ, Allah Most High has revealed in the Qur'ān love and mercy with clear emphasis, declaring His Esteemed Messenger the mercy incarnate. Allah says:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

«And, (O Esteemed Messenger,) We have not sent you but as a mercy for all the worlds.»¹

This holy verse of the Qur'ān vividly elaborates that Almighty Allah raised the Prophet ﷺ as an epitome of mercy and he is the embodiment of mercy for the entire universe. The Prophet ﷺ manifested this attribute of his on many occasions.

Massive violence and oppression were inflicted by the Meccan polytheists and disbelievers upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions. Some would get whipped and others were stretched on burning coals. Sometimes the Holy Prophet ﷺ was wounded with stones and other times social boycotts were declared against him.

At the peak of ghastly violence, when the noble Companions submitted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ to invoke a curse upon the oppressors and polytheists, the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied:

إِنِّي لَمْ أُبَعِّثْ لَعَانًا، وَإِنَّمَا بِعَثْ رَحْمَةً.

¹ Qur'ān 21:107.

“I was not sent as a curser; I was only sent as a mercy.”¹

Despite atrocious afflictions caused by the polytheists of Mecca, the Prophet ﷺ of mercy clearly stated to the noble Companions that he was sent to humanity as a paragon of mercy.

According to Abū Hurayra, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ رَحْمَةً وَلَمْ أُبَعِّثْ عَذَابًا.

“I was raised as an embodiment of mercy and not as a torment.”²

Hence, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has described himself as the embodiment of mercy and not as a source of torture and harm to others.

From the above traditions and the like, the following two exalted attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have been elucidated:

1. Love
2. Non-violence

These two attributes are incarnate in the personality of the most esteemed Prophet ﷺ. The love of the Prophet demands of us to totally shape ourselves into the Prophetic mould, pursuing the path of non-violence. Loving the creation of God Most High is an indispensable part of the love of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Likewise, the concept of living a life of non-violence and abstinence from causing any harm to others is the quintessence of the teachings and the conduct of the esteemed Prophet ﷺ.

According to Salmān the Persian ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا بَعَثْتَنِي رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ.

¹ Set forth by •Muslim in *al-Šahīh: Kitāb al-birr wa šila wa al-adab* [On Piety, Filial Duty, and Good Manners], chapter: “The Prohibition of Invoking Curses Against Creatures and Other Things,” 4:2006 §2599; •al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-mufrad*, 119 §321; •Abū Ya'lā in *al-Musnad*, 11:35 §6174; •Abū Nu'aym in *Dalā'il al-nubuwā*, 1:40 §2; •al-Bayhaqī in *Shu'ab al-īmān*, 2:144 §1403; •Ibn 'Asākir in *Tārikh Dimashq*, 4:92; •al-usaynī in *al-Bayān wa al-ta'rīf*, 1:283 §754; •Ibn Kathīr in *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Āzīm*, 3:202.

² Al-Bayhaqī, *Shub al-Iman*, 2:144, #1403; Ibn Asakar, *Tarikh Madina Damishq*, 4:92

Indeed, Allah the Most High did not raise me but as a mercy for all the worlds.¹

This hadith describes the mercy of the exalted Prophet ﷺ with the exclusion (*hasr*) as it has been demonstrated in the Qur'ānic verse: *«And, (O Esteemed Messenger,) We have not sent you but as a mercy for all the worlds»* [Q.21:107]. According to Arabic grammar, when the word *lā* signifying exclusion is used with negation like the word *mā*, then the description has the benefit of exclusion. In *wa mā arsalnāka illā rahmat lil 'ālamīna* the word *mā* has been used for negation followed by *illā*, which describes exclusion. This exclusive construction of the sentence denotes that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been ‘only’ sent as a mercy. In other words, it is not at all possible that someone may get hurt by the Holy Prophet ﷺ nor can he be a source of pain or torture for anyone, for he is mercy incarnate. Therefore, whether friend or foe, believer or disbeliever, pious or impious, whoever approaches Allah's Messenger ﷺ will be blessed with mercy, compassion, attention, kindness, forgiveness and reward and will not be subjected to any trace of avenge or disappointment. That is what has been conveyed in this hadith using the word of exclusion, “My Lord has sent me only as mercy for all the worlds.”

2.1 THE PERSONALITY OF THE PROPHET ﷺ IS THE PARAGON OF MERCY AND LOVE

The most esteemed Prophet ﷺ has been raised as the greatest gift of mercy in this universe. This mercy is not acquired, but it is gifted. It expounds that this mercy is not earned by striving, training or practising, but Allah Most Gracious bestowed this mercy as an instinct in the Prophet's ﷺ holy personality. It is a bestowal of Allah

¹ Set forth by •Ahmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 5:268, 437 §§22361, 23757; •Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-sunna* [The Book of the Sunna], chapter: “The Prohibition of Maligning the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh a,” 4:215 §4659; •al-Tabarānī in *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 8:196 §7803; •Abū Nu'aym in *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, 1:4 §1; •al-Mundhīrī in *al-Targhib wa al-tarhib*, 3:181 §3583; •Ibn Rajab in *Jāmi' al-'ulūm wa al-hikam*, 1:415; •al-Haythamī in *Majma' al-zawā'id*, 5:69; •al-Suyūtī in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:688.

Most Gracious that he formed mercy an instinct in the Prophet's ﷺ holy person. The day the Holy Prophet ﷺ was created, Allah made his sublime physical existence and his hallowed spirit a fountain of mercy. Therefore, mercy has been kneaded in his creation and has been instilled in his instinct. When Allah Most High willed to send down to earth His biggest treasure and reservoir of His mercy and compassion and to distribute this mercy to His creation, He raised His Beloved Messenger ﷺ as a magnificent treasure and a grand bestowal, the fountainhead of mercy for all the creation of the universe. According to Abū Hurayra ﷺ, Allah's Messenger ﷺ put it in these words:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَحْمَةٌ مُهَدَّدَةٌ.

O people! Indeed, I am a mercy gifted (to all the worlds).¹

According to Abū Umāma ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا بَعَثَنِي رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ وَهُدًى لِلْعَالَمِينَ.

"Indeed, He only raised me as a mercy and guidance for all the worlds."²

Of these narrations, the first demonstrates that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'I am sent only as an absolute mercy to all the worlds and the realms of creation; also I am an epitome of peace, mercy, love and compassion for the whole of creation.'

The second narration implies a wide spectrum: 'Allah has sent me, to all the classes and communities of humanity as mercy and guidance, without any discrimination of colour, race and religion. Whether

¹ Set forth by •al-Dārimī in the introduction of *al-Sunan*, section, "How the Prophet's Affair Was in the Beginning ﷺ," 1:21 §10; •Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaf*, 6:325 §31782; •al-‘akim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:91 §100; •al-Quḍā’ī in *Musnad al-Shihāb*, 2:189–190 §1160–1161; •al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu’jam al-awsat*, 3:223 §2981 and in *al-Mu’jam al-saghīr*, 1:168 §264; •al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-īmān*, 2:143–144 §§1402, 1404, 1445; •al-Haythamī in *Majma‘ al-zawā’id*, 8:257.

² Set forth by •Ahmed b. Hanbal in *al-Musnad*, 5:257, 268, 437 # 22272, 22361, 23757; •Abu Nu‘aym in *Dalāl al-Nubuwah*, 1:4 #1; Mundhiri, *al-Targhib w al-Tarhib*, 3:181, #3583

Muslim or non-Muslim, white or black, rich or poor, I am sent to all the spheres of worlds only as mercy and guidance.'

Guidance, light, mercy, compassion and love are integrated in the holy personality of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. His inviolable existence is an eternal source of love, mercy, guidance, compassion and peace for the whole humanity. Violence, coercion, injustice, oppression and torture have no place in the sphere of his all-embracing personality. This is the crux of Islamic teachings.

2.2 THE PROPHET'S ﷺ ATTRIBUTES OF MERCY AND LOVE IN EARLIER SCRIPTURES

According to 'Aṭā' b. Yāsār ﷺ: "I met 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ ﷺ and said to him that we have read and heard what has been revealed in the Qur'ān about the exalted Messenger of Allah. In addition, we have also heard what the Holy Prophet ﷺ, on different occasions, told us about his sacred personality, occurrences and his venerable station. Tell me about the attributes of the Messenger of Allah that have been revealed in the Torah."

'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr k replied:

أَجْلُ وَاللهِ، إِنَّهُ لَمَوْصُوفٌ فِي التُّورَاةِ بِعَضٍ صِفَتِهِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ: {يَا أَيُّهَا
الَّتِي إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَهِيدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا}، وَحِرْزًا لِلْأَمَمِينَ. أَنْتَ
عَبْدِي وَرَسُولِي. سَمِّينُكَ الْمُتَوَكِّلُ لَيْسَ بِقَطْ وَلَا غَلِيلٌ وَلَا سَخَابٌ فِي
الْأَسْوَاقِ وَلَا يَدْفَعُ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَلَكِنْ يَعْفُوْ وَيَغْفِرُ. وَلَنْ يَقْبِضَهُ اللَّهُ
حَتَّى يُقْبِلَ بِهِ الْجِلَّةُ الْعَوْجَاءُ بِأَنْ يَقُولُوا «لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ» وَيَفْتَحُ بِهَا أَعْيُنًا
عُمِيًّا وَآذَانًا صُمًّا وَفُؤُودًا غُلْفًا.

Yes. By Allah! He is also described in the Torah with some of his attributes mentioned in the Qur'ān, «O (Esteemed) Prophet! Surely, We have sent you as a Witness (to the truth and the creation), a Bearer of glad tidings (of the beauty of the Hereafter) and a Warner (of the torment in the Hereafter)» [Q.33:45], and a protection for the unlettered. You are My

slave and Messenger. I have named you *al-Mutawakkal* [the trustworthy one] who is not vicious, harsh and loud in the markets. He does not avenge a wrongdoing with the same; rather he avoids and forgives. Allah will not take him back to Himself until He straightens His misguided community through him so that they affirm the Oneness of Allah, ‘There is no God but Allah.’ Likewise, through him He will open blind eyes, deaf ears and locked (polluted) hearts.¹

Allah Most High revealed the attributes of the exalted personality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the Torah centuries before, and Musa narrated to the Children of Israel that the final Messenger of Allah ﷺ would be endowed with these attributes. He will love all the members and communities of humanity. One would never find even a trace of violence, hurtfulness, harshness and inflexibility in his temperament, inward and outward conduct and in his conversation. The noble Companions experienced, day and night, the practical illustration of these attributes in the personality of the most esteemed Prophet ﷺ.

2.3 ISLAM PROTECTS THE RIGHTS OF THE ELDERLY AND CHILDREN

Islam enjoins respect towards the elderly and compassion towards the young. According to ‘Amr b. Shu‘ayb, on the authority of his father, his grandfather said:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرًا وَيَعْرِفْ شَرَفَ كَبِيرًا.

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Saḥīḥ*: *Kitāb al-buyūc* [The Book of Transactions], chapter: “The Prohibition of Being Loud and Boisterous in the Marketplace,” 2:747 §2018, and in *Kitāb al-tafsīr* [The Book of Qur’ānic Exegesis], chapter: “On the Verse *{Certainly We have sent you as a witness, a giver of glad tidings, and a warner}*,” 4:1831 §4558, and in *al-Adab al-mufrad*, 95 §246; •Ahmad b. Anbal in *al-Musnād*, 2:174 §6622; •al-Dārimī in *al-Sunan*, 1:16 §6; •Abū Nu‘aym in *Iḥyā al-awliyā*, 5:387; •Ibn Sa‘d in *Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, 1:360–362; •al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 7:45 §13079, and in *Shu‘ab al-īmān*, 2:137 §1410, and in *al-I’tiqād*, 1:256; •al-Maqdisī in *al-Āḥādīth al-mukhtāra*, 9:460 §435; •al-Tabarī in *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 9:83; •Ibn Kathīr in *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, 2:254.

وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ: وَيَعْرُفُ حَقًّا كَبِيرًا.

“Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, ‘He is not from my Community who does not show mercy and compassion to our young and does not respect our elderly.’”

According to another report, “and acknowledge the rights of our elderly.”¹

The expression *laysa minnā* is a strict admonition implying ‘he does not belong to us’ who denies clemency and compassion to the young and does not revere the elderly. Indeed, through his saying, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has imparted the teaching of moral excellence to his *Umma* which is a sublime collection of human values.

Which other religions take care of the human rights to such a height through conveying the commandment with the words: *haqqa kabīrina*. Islam declares respect and reverence a right of the elderly and an obligation on others to show respect to the elderly and aged, pious or impious? Similarly, Islam has also affirmed mercy and compassion a right of the young and the obligation of the rest of the community (*Umma*) whether the young are pious or naughty.

Also, it is noteworthy to elucidate that, in the present era, there are special privileges that are arranged for the rights of senior citizens. However, this concept was first introduced to the world by the exalted Messenger of Allah ﷺ. By conveying the comprehensive concept of the rights of the elderly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ enjoined his community fourteen centuries ago with which the modern world is now acquainted that whoever does not revere the elderly is not from his community. This is also contained in the following tradition narrated by ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbās:

¹ Set forth by •Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:207 §6935; •Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan*, *Kitāb al-sunna* [The Book of the Prophetic Practice], chapter: “On Mercy,” 4:286 §4943; •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan*, *Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila* [The Book of Piety and the Filial Duty], chapter: “On what has been Reported Concerning Mercy Toward Young Children,” 4:322 §1920; •al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-mufrad*, 130 §355; •Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaf*, 5:214 §25359; •al-Hākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 4:197 §7353; •al-Tabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, 8:308 §8154.

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرَنَا وَيُؤْقِرْ كَبِيرَنَا.

“He who does not show mercy to our young and respect our elders is not from us.”¹

2.4 SHORTENING PRAYER FOR MERCY AND COMPASSION TO MINORS

The entire life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is permeated with the ideology, practice and training of mercy, love and compassion he imparted to the Companions. When he started leading the companions, male and female, in congregational ritual prayers, he would wish to recite lengthy *sūras* of the Qur’ān to stand longer before Almighty Allah. However, sometimes having recited only a small portion of the Qur’ān, he would hear some child crying from the rear rows or some corner of the mosque. Then he would shorten his prayer and abandon the pursuit of benefiting a long recitation in front of Allah only with the sole intention of avoiding the agony of crying child’s mother. If the child had continued to cry, the attention of the mother would have been diverted towards the crying child and she would have felt impatient to end the prayer soon and soothe her child.

The Holy Prophet himself mentioned this. Anas b. Mālik ﷺ has narrated that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said:

إِنِّي لَأَدْخُلُ فِي الصَّلَاةِ وَأَنَا أُرِيدُ إِطَالَتَهَا. فَأَسْمَعُ بُكَاءَ الصَّبِيِّ فَأَنْجُوْزُ فِي صَلَاتِي مِمَّا أَعْلَمُ مِنْ شِدَّةِ وَجْدِ أُمِّهِ مِنْ بُكَائِهِ.

“Indeed, I begin the prayer and wish to lengthen it, but I hear the crying of a young child and so I shorten my prayer, for I

¹ Set forth by •Ahmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 1:257 §2329; •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan*, *Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila* [The Book of Piety and the Filial Duty], chapter: “On what has been Reported Concerning Mercy Toward Young Children,” 4:322 §1921; •Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:203 §458; •al-Bazzār in *al-Musnad*, 7:158 §2718; •al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam al-awsat*, 5:107 §4812 and in *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, 11:449 §12276.

know the severe distress the mother feels due to his crying.”¹

In this narration, we learn the Holy Prophet’s ﷺ own benevolent conduct. We can also see more unprecedented evidence of the love of humanity in the conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he showed to his noble Companions. He had issued standing instructions to the Companions discharging the duties of prayer leaders in different places, so that they would shorten the recitation of *sūras* while leading the prayers (especially the night prayer) to provide ease to the ailing, elderly, tired, infirm, women and children.

Abū Mas‘ūd al-Anṣārī ﷺ narrates that when Allah’s Messenger ﷺ was informed about a Companion, the prayer-leader of his tribal mosque, who used to recite longer *sūras* of the Qur’ān, he said:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ! إِنَّ مِنْكُمْ مُنْفَرِينَ . فَإِنَّكُمْ أَمَّ النَّاسَ فَلْيُوْجِزْ ، فَإِنَّ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ
الْكَبِيرَ وَالضَّعِيفَ وَذَا الْحَاجَةِ .

O people! some amongst you make people turn away (dismayed about *Dīn* due to their harsh behaviour and rigid habits and practices). If any of you leads prayer, he should curtail it making recitation, bowing and prostration brief because amongst you are old, elderly and also needy (who cannot stand for long due to debility or must get back to their work immediately after prayer). Therefore, care for them, be polite with them and shorten the congregational prayer.²

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-adhān* [The Book of the Azan], chapter: “On the One who Lightens his Prayer when Young Children Cry,” 1:250 §677; •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [The Book of Prayer], chapter: “Commanding the Imams to Lighten the Prayer,” 1:343 §470; •Ahmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 3:109 §12086; •Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:510 §2139; •Abū Ya‘lā in *al-Musnad*, 5:441 §3144; •al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 2:393 §3848, and in *Shu‘ab al-īmān*, 7:477 §11054.

² Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*: *Kitāb al-adhān* [The Book on the Azan], chapter: “Concerning He Who Complains about His Imam When the Latter Lengthens the Prayer for Too Long,” 1:249 §672; •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*: *Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [The Book of Prayer], chapter: “On Commanding the Imams to Lighten the Prayer,” 1:340 §466.

Abū Hurayra ﷺ has also narrated a hadith containing the same command. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِذَا أَمَّ أَحَدُكُمْ لِلنَّاسِ، فَلْيُخَفَّفْ، فَإِنَّ فِيهِمُ الصَّغِيرُ وَالْكَبِيرُ وَالضَّعِيفُ
وَالْمَرِيضُ. فَإِذَا صَلَّى وَحْدَهُ، فَلْيُصِّلْ كَيْفَ شَاءَ.

“When one of you leads others in prayer, shorten it, for among them are the young, elderly, weak, infirm and the ill. And if one of you prays alone, let him pray for as long as he wants.”¹

This is the true picture of Islam—the pure practice and conduct of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. In addition to accommodating human values, agonies and personal, and physical concerns of fellow human beings, Islam also cares for human feelings and sentiments to the extent that the Holy Prophet ﷺ not only gave up prolonged standing during prayer and shortened his own prayer, but also expressly elucidated it to the *Umma* for effective implementation. So he has conferred on us the basic principle of tenderness even in the acts of worship—the prayer-leader should always be compassionate to his followers. His merciful and clement commands demonstrate that the fundamentals of the Prophet’s ﷺ thought and ideology was imbued in ease, gentleness, facilitation, mercy and compassion for others.

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Saḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-adhān* [The Book of the Azan], chapter: “When One Prays Alone Let Him Lengthen it for as Long as He Likes,” 1:248 §671; •Muslim in *al-Saḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [The Book of Prayer], chapter: “On Commanding the Imams to Lighten the Prayer,” 1:341 §467; •Ahmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:486 §10311; •Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan*, *Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [The Book of Prayer], chapter: “On Lightening the Prayer,” 1:211 §794; •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan*, *Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [The Book of Prayer], chapter: “On What has been Reported Regarding the Statement that if One of You Leads the People in Prayer, that He Should Lighten It,” 1:461 §236; •al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan*, *Kitāb al-imāma* [The Book on the Imamate], chapter: “On the Duty of the Imam to Lighten [the Prayer],” 2:94 §823; •Mālik in *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, *Kitāb ṣalāt al-jamā'a* [The Book on the Congregational Prayer], chapter: “What is Done in the Congregational Prayer,” 1:134 §301; •Ibn Hibbān in *al-Saḥīḥ*, 5:56 § 1760; •al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 3:117 §5058.

2.5 ISLAM IS A RELIGION [DīN] OF GENTLENESS AND CLEMENCY

Gentleness and clemency are the distinctions of Islam. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās ﷺ narrates:

قَيْلَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ: أَيُّ الْأَدِيَانِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: الْحَنِيفَةُ السَّمْحَةُ.

A man asked Allah’s Messenger ﷺ, ‘Which religion is the most beloved in the sight of Allah?’ The Messenger replied, ‘The one which is the easiest and based on tolerance.’¹

According to ‘Ā’isha ﷺ, Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said on the occasion of ‘Id:

إِنِّي أُرْسِلْتُ بِحَنِيفَةٍ سَمْحَةً.

“I have been sent with the most tolerant *Dīn* (easiest religion).”²

The study of the conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ enlightens that he never adopted an extremist approach in any matter and preferred gentleness, easiness, mercy and compassion by staying always moderate and balanced. According to ‘Ā’isha ﷺ:

كَانَ يُحِبُّ مَا يُحَقِّفُ عَنْهُمْ.

“The Prophet would always prefer and approve the conduct of the noble Companions which would become the source of gentleness and easiness for them.”³

The mother of Companions, Aisha ﷺ, has narrated another hadith that draws the attention of the *Umma* to a specific aspect of the

¹ Set forth by •Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 1:236; •‘Abd b. Humayd, *al-Musnad*, p. 199 §569; •al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, p. 108 §287.

² Set forth by •Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 6:116, 233; •al-Humaydī, *al-Musnad*, 1:123 §254; •Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-bārī*, 2:444.

³ Ibid., Bk.: *Mawāqīt al-ṣalāt* [The Timing of the Prayers], Ch.: “On the Missed Prayers that Can Be Prayed After the ‘Aṣr Prayer,” 1:213 §565.

Prophet's ﷺ conduct:

مَا خَيْرٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ يَعْلَمُ أَمْرِنَا، إِلَّا أَخَذَ أَيْسَرَهُمَا، مَا لَمْ يَكُنْ إِلَّا مُنْهَى.

“Never was Allah’s Messenger ﷺ presented with two options except that he would choose the easier of the two, so long as it was not a sin.”¹

The Prophet ﷺ would opt for the easier act in order that the *Umma* would not forsake it and the *Umma* would stay steadfast due to its inherent easiness. The hard and arduous act is usually given up after a while and breaks the continuity. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ would always prefer the easier acts for the facilitation and easiness of the *Umma* and make it a long-lasting practice. Numerous examples from the biography of Allah’s Messenger can be quoted in this regard. The following tradition would suffice to elaborate the point.

Abū Hurayra ﷺ has narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَوْلَا أَنْ أَشْقَى عَلَى النَّاسِ لَأَمْرَתُهُمْ بِالسَّوَاكِ مَعَ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ.

“If I had not regarded it a hardship for my *Umma*”, or said, for humanity, I would have enjoined them to brush their teeth before every ritual prayer.”²

Another hadith report relates that the Holy Prophet said:

لَا أَمْرَتُهُمْ بِالسَّوَاكِ عِنْدَ كُلِّ وُضُوءٍ

“I would have enjoined them to brush their teeth before every ritual ablution.”³

¹ Ibid., Bk.: *al-Manāqib* [The Exemplary Virtues], Ch.: “The Qualities of the Prophet ﷺ,” 3:1306 §3367; •Muslim in *al-Šaḥīḥ*: Bk.: *al-Fadā'il* [Virtues], Ch.: “The Prophet’s Distance Away from Sins,” 4:1813 §2327.

² Al-Bukhari, al-Sahih, Bk: Friday, Ch: Brushing teeth on Fridays, 1:303, #847

³ Al-Bukhari, al-Sahih, Bk: Friday, Ch: Brushing teeth on Fridays, 1:303, #847

2.6 APPRECIATION OF DEEDS RESTS ON GENTLENESS AND POLITENESS

It must be kept in view that appreciation and approval of pious deeds by Allah Most High does not predicate on a quantitative scale. Fulfilling the rights and dealing with people is based on adopting effective attention to human rights, politeness and excellence in conduct. Most of the Prophet's ﷺ injunctions draw our attention to adopting gentleness and politeness in our daily life.

According to 'Ā'isha ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

يَا عَائِشَةُ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ مَنْ يُحِبُ الرَّفْقَ فِي الْأَمْرِ كُلِّهِ.

“O 'Ā'isha, God is Gentle and He loves gentleness in everything.”¹

In another tradition: According to 'Ā'isha ؓ:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ: يَا عَائِشَةُ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ مَنْ يُحِبُ الرَّفْقَ وَيُعْطِي عَلَى الرَّفْقِ مَا لَا يُعْطِي عَلَى الْعُنْفِ.

“Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: ‘O 'Ā'isha, God is Gentle and He loves gentleness. He bestows for gentleness what He does not bestow due to harshness.’”²

It is Allah's Gentleness to His creation that He is the Most-Compassionate, Ever-Merciful and Most-Forgiving. His gentleness is

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb iṣtīṭāba al-murtaddīn wa al-mu'anidīn wa qitālīhim* [The Book on Demanding the Repentance of the Apostates and Reprobates, and Fighting Them], Ch.: ‘What is to be Done When a Non-Muslim Citizen [or Anyone Else] Presents Himself’, 6:2539 §6528. •Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], Ch.: ‘On Kindness’, 2:1216 §3688.

² Set forth by •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb* [The Book of Piety, Filial Duty and Good Manners], Ch.: ‘The Virtue of Gentleness’, 4:2003 §2593. •Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-adab* [The Book of Good Manners], Ch.: ‘On Gentleness’, 4:254 §4807. •Ahmad b. Hanbal in *al-Musnad*, 1:112 §902.

that He is the Lord of infinite mercy, Lord of all the worlds and a Sustainer. His gentleness is also sublime generosity, forgiveness and oft-relenting. Hence, He likes gentleness in all practices and loves all those who practise gentleness. He befittingly rewards gentle and polite but blights the deeds devoid of politeness.

According to Jarīr b. 'Abd Allāh ﷺ, he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

مَنْ يُحِرِّمِ الرَّفْقَ، يُحِرِّمِ الْخَيْرَ.

“He who is denied gentleness (mercy and compassion, take it for granted that he) is denied all good (by Allah).”¹

Therefore, in the light of these injunctions of the Prophet ﷺ, the secret of all acts of piety and goodness lies in gentleness and politeness. Whoever does not have politeness, even if all the struggle of that person is for promoting *Dīn*, Allah has not left any goodness for him and he has been deprived of every good.

The Prophet ﷺ has also said:

إِنَّ الرَّفْقَ لَا يَكُونُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا زَانَهُ، وَلَا يُنْتَعُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا شَانَهُ.

“Kindness and gentleness is such a (magnificent) blessing that Allah enhances (the value, weight, import and reward of) the matter kneaded in gentleness. However, the act devoid of gentleness would lose its value and get abased and demeaned.”²

It denotes that a pious act will be considered exalted in the sight of Allah due to its inherent quality of compassion and kindness.

¹ Set forth by •Muslim in *al-Šahīh*: Bk.: *al-Birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb* [Piety, Keeping Family Ties and Good Manners], Ch.: “The Virtue of Gentleness,” 4:2003 §2592; •Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan*: Bk.: *al-Adab* [Good Manners], Ch.: “Gentleness,” 4:255 §4809; •Ahmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 4:362; •Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan*: Bk.: *al-Adab* [Good Manners], Ch.: “Gentleness,” 21:1216 §3687; •Ibn Hibbān in *al-Šahīh*, 2:308 §598.

² Muslim, *al-Sahih*, Bk: Piety and recompense of propriety, chapter: Gentleness, 4:2004, #2594; Abu Dawud, *al-Sunan*, Bk: jihad, chapter: What has come to us about emigration and peace, 3:3, #2478

Contrarily, a righteous act, even if it relates to promoting and spreading Islam, will lose its weight, value and productivity due to its harshness.

What could be offered more to humanism and decency by any religion or by any code of life?

2.7 IMAMS AND HADITH SCHOLARS OF EARLY TIMES ON LENIENCY AND CLEMENCY

The concept to practise *Dīn* is not new. Allah's Messenger imparted the divine teachings of leniency, mercy and compassion to his *Umma* fourteen centuries ago. However, it is regrettable that some of the scholars of *Dīn* are not even inclined to give ear to these teachings, due to their narrow mindset, limited study, and cursory cognizance. On the other hand, the secular mindset of the modern generations of both non-Muslims and Muslims also perceives that perhaps Islam is devoid of the concept of a true *Dīn* of ease, compassion and politeness.

The ideologies of these three categories sprout from the dearth of knowledge, lack of awareness and partiality. The people of knowledge and wisdom are aware that Imam al-Bukhārī, Imam Muslim and other scholars of hadith were not born in modern times or in Europe or America. They earned the status of scholars of hadith thirteen hundred years before. They collected the Prophetic traditions in their respective books of hadith and formulated chapters on Islam as *Dīn* of ease and facility.

It should be remembered that none of the imams have set up any chapter in any of their hadith compendiums with titles depicting Islam as harsh or coercive. That was the era of Islam's scholastic predominance and world power of its time with regards to its vastness and might.

Islam was a superpower of its time and Imam al-Bukhārī lived in that era. However, instead of terrifying the world by megalomaniac policies, Islam would enlighten the world with its divine light of humanitarian and altruistic pursuits. In Imam al-Bukhārī's formulations in his book *al-Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the chapters on Islam as the *Dīn* of ease and facility prove that what we today preach as Islam's teachings on mercy and clemency are not our own personal ideological endeavours, but the scholars of hadith collected all these teachings contained in Prophetic

traditions in their hadith books thirteen centuries ago. According to Abū Hurayra ﷺ, Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ يُسْرٌ، وَلَنْ يُشَادَ الدِّينَ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا غَلَبَهُ.

“Indeed, the religion is ease, and no one makes it hard on himself otherwise he will be overpowered.”¹

Therefore, Islam is a *Dīn* that has never accommodated any harshness and extremism. It has discouraged, rejected and impeded even from calling towards Islam and preaching it in a harsh or aggressive manner to make people embrace faith. Islam opposes harshness and aggression and promotes facility and mercy. Allah has declared it in the Qur’ān:

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ﴾

﴿There is no compulsion in Dīn (Religion).﴾²

The following Prophetic traditions amply prove that Islam is a *Dīn* of politeness and easiness. Qatāda has reported that when asked about the most excellent *Dīn*, the Prophet ﷺ said twice:

إِنَّ خَيْرَ دِينِكُمْ أَيْسُرُهُ؛ إِنَّ خَيْرَ دِينِكُمْ أَيْسُرُهُ.

Indeed, the best of your religion is the easiest of it; indeed, the best of your religion is the easiest of it.³

In reality, no system of life is more modern than Islam. The young generation need to study Islam in depth; they should not decide without study and merely on hearsay that Islam has borrowed the concepts of human rights and human values from the Western world.

¹ Ibid., Bk.: *al-Imān* [The Faith], Ch.: “The Religion is Ease,” 1:23 §39.

² Qur’ān, 2:256.

³ Set forth by •Ahmad b. Hanbal in *al-Musnad*, 3:479; •al-Haythamī in *Majma‘ al-zawā‘id*, 1:61; and cited by •Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bārī*, 1:94; while al-Tabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, 18:230 §573; •Ibn Abī ‘Āsim in *al-Āhād wa al-mathānī*, 4:349 §2383; al-Quḍā‘ī in *Musnad al-Shihāb*, 2:219–220 §§1224–1225; and al-Maqdīsī in *al-Āhādīth al-mukhtāra* (7:132 §2565).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ bestowed the golden principles fourteen centuries ago to uproot terrorism and extremism. The West was then passing through the Dark Ages. America was not yet discovered. The sun of guidance shone on the land of Medina; the Prophet who was created first and raised last, the crown of the universe, imparted knowledge to the whole humanity to condemn extremism.

The question is, at that historical juncture, why was extremism denounced? Was the era of ignorance sunk in the darkness of extremism? The answer is yes; disbelief has always been extreme while Islam has always been compassionate and merciful. Therefore, extremism needed to be rejected and denounced in the past and also in the present. Extremism was manifested in different forms in every era and has always existed as a philosophy of life. However, contrary to that, a parallel philosophy of moderation and propriety has also existed in every era.

2.8 CONDUCT BASED ON EXTREMISM IS CONTRARY TO ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

While talking to Companions, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ twice explained that the excellent bearing of religion is premised on easiness, provision, benevolence, mercy and compassion. The one based on ease and provision should be regarded as the virtuous and exalted *Dīn*. Repeating his injunction, the Prophet ﷺ emphasized that if someone pursues the path of extremism, he should not be taken as a true Islamic model because Islam is only a polite and courteous way of life. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself defined politeness, compassion and easiness as the only excellent way that is inherent in Islam.

According to 'Urwa وَعْرَوْنَى, when the Companions asked from the Holy Prophet ﷺ about an issue:

أَعْلَمُنَا حَرَجٌ؟

Is there any harm in this (particular act)?

The Holy Prophet ﷺ repeated three times: "There is no harm, there is no harm, there is no harm." Then said:

أَكْثَرُهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ دِينَ اللَّهِ فِي يُسْرٍ.

“O people! Indeed Allah’s *Dīn* lies in ease.”¹

Saying it three times “there is no harm” stamps its veracity that the essence of Allah’s Religion, Islam, lies in easiness, facilitation, clemency and mercy. Therefore, one should reject the philosophy and practice of those who display extremism in their temperament and disposition. A conduct that negates easiness and politeness is far from Islamic teachings.

2.8.1 INJUNCTIONS TO ABSTAIN FROM VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM

The Prophetic traditions comprise countless episodes that demonstrate clear injunctions of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ to pursue life immersed in moderation, tolerance, compassion and easiness. He forbade extremism, exaggeration and violence in performing all our daily deeds and acts of worship. It is advised to all those Muslims who have been turned into extremists by adopting wrong interpretations of jihad to read what the Prophet ﷺ has said about Islam. ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbās has narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْعُلُوُّ فِي الدِّينِ.

“Beware of going to extremes in the religion.”²

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ adored moderation all his life and declared it the true religion. The Qur’ān has unequivocally declared

¹ Set forth by •Ahmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 5:69; •al-Bukhārī in *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 7:30–31 §135; •Ibn Abī ‘Āsim in *al-Āḥād wa al-mathānī*, 2:397 §1190; •Abū Ya‘lā in *al-Musnad*, 12:274 §6863; •Ibn al-Qānī in *Mu‘jam al-Ṣahāba*, 2:262 §780; and cited by •al-Haythamī in *Majma‘ al-zawā‘id*, 1:61–62.

² Set forth by •al-Nasā‘ī, *al-Sunan*, 5:268 §3058; •Ibn Mājah, *al-Sunan*, 2:1008 §3029; •Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Ṣahīh*, 9:183–184 §3871; •Abū Ya‘lā, *al-Musnad*, 4:316 §2427; •al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, 12:156 §12747; •al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 5:127.

Muslims a tolerant, moderate and balanced community—*ummatan wasatan*—conveying the message that this community treads the path of moderation and balance. However, the one who deviates from this path of equilibrium and adopts extremism exits himself from the Muslim community and also casts himself out of the ambit of Islam.

The Qur'ān says:

﴿وَأَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَلَمَّا فَلَّتِ الْأَشْمَارُ فَلَوْبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَقَّا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا﴾

«But call to mind the blessing of Allah upon you when you were enemies (one to another). Then He created the bond of love amongst your hearts, and by His blessing you became brothers. And you (had reached) the brink of a pit of the Fire (of Hell) but He rescued you from it.»¹

So it is the bond of love that melted the callous hearts with its warmth and galvanized them into one community, enjoying fraternity, geniality and altruism because:

﴿فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمُ الْغُلُوْبُ فِي الدِّينِ﴾

«For the only thing that destroyed those before you was extremism in the religion.»²

2.8.2 PROPHET'S ﷺ ADMONITION TO PERPETRATORS OF EXTREMISM IN RELIGION

Anas b. Mālik ﷺ has narrated that a delegation of three persons came to the Prophet ﷺ. They were consistent observers of night vigil, regular fast-keepers and abstainers from the world. They wanted to know

¹ Qur'ān, 3:103.

² Set forth by •al-Nasā'i, *al-Sunan*, 5:268 §3058; •Ibn Mājah, *al-Sunan*, 2:1008 §3029; •Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 9:183–184 §3871; •Abū Ya'la, *al-Musnad*, 4:316 §2427; •al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 12:156 §12747; •al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 5:127.

the Prophet's ﷺ daily routine in acts of worship and practices. They thought that knowing the Prophet's ﷺ routine and absolute following would enhance their acts of worship and devotion. They were apprised of the Prophet's ﷺ standard practice of observing night vigil, taking rest, and observing and breaking fast (hence, leading a balanced and poised life). Learning that, the three visitors, who came with extremist views about worship, felt humble but adamant to continue with their strenuous acts of worship. Considering the Messenger of Allah ﷺ pure of all sins and absolutely pious, they held themselves too sinful to relax and thought it imperative to attain to Allah's proximity and forgiveness through assiduous and diligent worship. Thus, they could not withdraw from their abundant devotion and hard struggle to consistently perform acts of worship. One of them said:

أَنَا أَصُومُ الدَّهْرَ وَلَا أُفْطِرُ.

“I shall fast perpetually and never break my fast.”

The other said:

أَنَا، فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْمُتَّدِّةِ أَصَمِّ اللَّيْلَ أَبَدًا.

“I shall always pray the whole night.”

The third one also vowed:

أَنَا أَعْتَزِلُ النِّسَاءَ، فَلَا أَتَرْوَجُ أَبَدًا.

“I will always distance myself from women and will never marry.”

All the three visitors pledged themselves to persist with their routine of tireless worship and resolved never to relax. Meanwhile, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, upon hearing their conversation, inquired:

أَنْتُمُ الَّذِينَ قُلْتُمْ كَذَّا وَكَذَّا؟

“Are you the ones who have uttered this and this?”

They submitted: “Yes, O Messenger of Allah ﷺ.”

Then he said:

وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَخْشَاكُمْ اللَّهَ وَأَنْتَمْ لَهُ.

“By Allah! I fear Allah more than you do and I guard myself more against sins due to His fear.”

He told them that he had stronger passion of Allah’s worship, fear and wariness than they all had.

لَكُنِّي أَصُومُ وَأَفْطُرُ، وَأَصَلِّ وَأَرْقُدُ، وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ.

“Yet I fast and break my fast, I pray and take rest, and I marry women as well.”

Remember:

فَمَنْ رَغَبَ عَنْ سُنْتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي.

“Whoever deviates from my Sunna is not from me.”¹

There are three aspects observed in this hadith:

- a. Observing the night vigil every night without any rest.
- b. Fasting daily without breaking it.
- c. Never marrying, abstaining from a balanced worldly life.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sternly spurned these three ideas based on assiduousness and labour. He explicitly mentioned that he was the most God-fearing, most pious and most ardent worshipper, but the most of all his methodology promoted balance. He would perform worship but relax and sleep too. He would observe fasts but also break it. He would marry and fulfil the rights of his wives. These are his practices and mode of conduct. The one who would not follow his Sunna (practices) and mode of conduct would not belong to his *Umma* (community).

¹ Ibid., Bk.: *al-Nikāh* [The Marriage], Ch.: “The Encouragement to Marry,” 5:1949 §4776; •Muslim in *al-Šaḥīḥ*: Bk.: *al-Nikāh* [Marriage], Ch.: “The Recommendation of Marriage for Those who are Able,” 2:1020 §1401.

2.8.3 EXTREMISTS ARE PROMISED ERADICATION

'Abd Allah b. Mas'ūd has narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

هَلَكَ الْمُتَنَطِّعُونَ.

"Ruined are the extremists who exceed limits."¹

Al-mutanaṭṭi'ūn are the people who are extremists, radicals and illogical. This hadith report is an evident message against extremism.

2.9 NO PHILOSOPHY IS COMPARABLE TO ISLAM'S ALTRUISTIC TEACHINGS

Islam has enhanced and elevated its teachings about human emotions and empathy par excellence. No philosophy of the world can be juxtaposed with Islam in any philanthropic pursuits. It is unfortunate that we have not understood Islam to its real depths. The secular mindsets fail to attain its glory and deny it, while those who claim to be the Muslims portray a deplorable picture of Islam, due to their ignorance and lack of acquaintance with its basic knowledge. This is causing the unjust disrepute to this religion of mercy and compassion.

Islam, which urges us to shorten our exalted act of ritual prayer for providing comfort to the mother's agony and child's crying – how could it tolerate or allow the beheading and butchering of a child? How could it allow firing bullets straight to the chest, or tolerate it when someone's house is burnt and hundreds of thousands of children, women, elderly and ailing are subjected to carnage and are blasted by suicide bombers? What link do these brutal culprits have with Islam and the Qur'ān that they call themselves Muslims? They are the ones who have labelled their self-interpreted ideology as Islam and have brought disrepute into Islam. In reality, they are the enemies of Islam who are ignorant about the blessings, compassion, mercy and dignity of Islam. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would always teach his noble Companions to follow the path of balance, moderation, easiness and convenience, and would always forbid extremism and illogical thinking.

¹ Muslim al-Sahih

To become a true believer, we are required not only to embrace ideologically the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but also to practically demonstrate them in society.

As Muslims, we should know which actions are according to Islam and which actions exit Islam. By knowing them, we can unite and free the God-given land of Pakistan from terrorism and extremism.

Our peace will be a dream; it cannot be practically implemented until we rise as a unit above the political interests and eliminate the extremist and terrorist elements, their supporters, abettors and masterminds. We need to give the slogans to society about love and non-violence, which is the foundation of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ teachings of peace, mercy, love and compassion.